

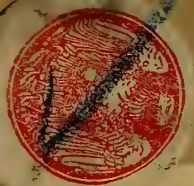
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MID LIGHT AND SHADE

JOHN LANGDON JONES



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MID LIGHT AND SHADE

Mid Light and Shade

BY

JOHN LANGDON JONES



NEW YORK
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1921

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TO HER WHO TAUGHT ME MY FIRST WORD,
FIRST POEM, AND EARLIEST LOVE
—MY MOTHER

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MID LIGHT AND SHADE

ROUGH DIAMONDS

Enclosed within the blackest vaults of earth—
Deeper and darker than Cimmerian caves—

 With winding galleries,
Are veins of wealth unknown, nor born until
Repeated blows discover them for birth:

Dear diamonds that will soon grow up to be
Zealous to decorate marmoreal throats

 Immaculately white.
Many are born for royal elegance;
More go to make the commoners' jewelry. . . .

Each life that crosses ours may bear a vein,
Rich only when we know what lies within.

 My creed forever this:
A soul, however dark, unloved, has yet
No need but some heart's sweet, all-filling pain.

EXPECTANCY

Here I stand beneath the sky,
Waiting like a beggar-child,
For the love you promised me,
With assurance sweetly smiled.

'Tis a bowl of Barmecide's
Covering an empty space;
Nothing underneath it lies,
Yet it has such lovely grace!

I feel older than the trees
With their broken boughs above:
Consenescence is my dream—
Waiting, hoping for your love.

If, arrayed in spirit-guise,
You return the thousandth year,
I may be a name, a stone,
Crumbled earth, decayed—but here.

THOUGHTS OF AN APRIL DAY

I watched the playful, short-lived foam,
I felt the sea-breeze stir;
I thought of the days that are yet to come
And remembered the days that were.

THE SAND-MAN

I wrote a name upon the sand,
 Out yonder, where the tide was low,
 And where the undulating sea
On the impressionable strand,
 Row after row,
Had left its wave-prints legibly.

I walked again upon the beach
 To that place where in mindful mood
 I cut those letters sharp and gray . . .
But none were on the sandy reach;
 The heedless flood
Had swept and wasted them away.

I printed there again that name;
 Once more the sea effaced my art,
 As would it though a hundred hands
Should write. But could I grave the same
 Upon your heart,
I should not scratch upon the sands.

MOMENTS MUSICAUX

I

IMPROMPTU

The evening is falling
 Upon you and me;
The wood-birds are calling
 Their sweetest melody.
And clouds in their glory,
 With fringe dipped in gold,
Illumine the story
 In colors bright and bold.

The sharp hills—the soft hills run blue to the sea,
The noon light—the twilight ambers the last tree;
 The lamp that blinds
Extinguished by Favonian winds:
 Breathing night.

These words may be sung to a part of one of Schubert's Impromptus—Op. 142, No. 2.

MOMENTS MUSICAUX

The morning is breaking
In far-distant lands;
The stars, sky forsaking,
Are glistening on sands.
The splendors born yonder,
The days tinged anew,
Are voices of wonder
That whisper of you.

II

PRELUDE

I heard a voice so crystal-clear,
Deep-buried in umbrageous trees,
An angel's song across the breeze,
In liquid tones, full-throated, near.

And so divine it led my feet
Along the pillow'd path of pines,
Where rays are checked in patchwork lines,
And flowers yield their fragrance sweet:
Softly I trod.

I did not dare to desecrate
The Sabbath-silent mystery,
And that fair fount of ecstasy
That poured its song to consecrate

MOMENTS MUSICAUX

Cathedral woods, whose hallowed hush
Admits no note of threnody,
But only such rapt melody
As came when I beheld that thrush,
Alone with God.

III

NOCTURNE

The night-winds sweep across your ardent cheeks,
And fan the flush of fever from your face,
And something speaks
To tell me that I can again embrace
Your pain-tired form, and give you of my strength
With kisses tender, tranquil, till at length
I have you well.

And we shall steal into the dreamy eve
Where drowsy Morpheus on his misty bed
Begins to weave
His web of gossamers and gauze, and spread
A filmy veil across the naked moon
To catch the moisture of her silent swoon
From poppy drops.

MOMENTS MUSICAUX

That drug with dripping dew the languid air
And every blade, and leave their anodyne

Upon your hair.

But that is idle, dear, while you are mine,
And subtle vapors, volatile, in vain

Curl round your head again and e'er again

Only to melt

Into the absorbing atmosphere with each
Warm breath of yours. And all the gloom I saw

Did somehow teach

Me to possess more faith in that great law
Of love, which laughs at death and dangers, too.

The night is spent: I did but dream that you

Were ill at all.

IV

FANTASY

Give me your music, O ye winds that breathe
Upon the trembling birches and the firs,
Which send back from their fine, vibrating wires
Hymn-harmonies that haunt the homes of song.

MOMENTS MUSICAUX

Give me your power to rise, O soaring bird,
Above the things that all but chain us down.
How fresh your notes when all the rain is gone,
How glorious your voice among the clouds!

Give me your power of constancy, O waves,
That move from out that vast, tremendous world
In hues of silver-gray and rosy-pink,
Caressing broken outlines of the shore.

Give me your all, O nature, from your store,
Teach me to taste your crystal founts of love;
Show me your wealth from moss to star-sown skies,
And in the world of sin to see—beyond.

Then shall my life grow purer through the years,
And learn the truths I thought were dead and cold;
And deeds shall bathe in a full flood of light,
Like sunset trees against a screen of gold.

V

SLUMBER SONG

Sweet my child, O listen to a tale
Of fairy forms and elves diminutive,
That work their tiny fingers all the night,

MOMENTS MUSICAUX

Weaving the sun from slender threads of gold
They draw from out the curls of your soft hair.

And dream, O breath of my own life,
Of misty shapes that guide your boat
In yonder sea of myriad stars,
Wee lantern'd islands all afloat.

The moon will be your beacon, blanch'd and pale,
And its adumbrant, scattered radiance give,
Diffusing round your sleep its borrowed light
That lies about your cheek and pillow cold—
My lily bloom, so exquisitely fair.

O heaven, from each winged sprite
Raise up an angel snowy white,
To hover near that head adored.
From worlds of weirdest witchery
Create new realms of mystery,
Unpictured, voiceless, unexplored.

And so a kiss I leave upon your brow,
Just as a benediction on your way;
Sail on, blest babe, the zephyrs point the prow;
But, darling, come and wake me when 'tis day.

MOMENTS MUSICAUX

VI

SCHERZO

Come, great big world, and play with me,
For I am sad and lone;
I want to have thee for my own,
I have no one but thee.

I want to know why yonder cloud
Looms up with threat so bold;
And see if there is any gold
Beneath the rainbow proud,

That makes a prism arc across
The hanging veil of showers;
Or what becomes of all the flowers
That die in living moss. . . .

No longer sad, but gay, O earth,
Thy splendor moves my soul:
The grief that first upon me stole
Has given way to mirth.

WHEN I CONSIDER

TO G. H. F.

At even, when I lay me down somewhere
Between the leaden east and golden west,
And watch the cautious, fiery moon peer from
The flatness of the sea, and rise like some
Embossed silver sphere, and steal across
The highway of the heavens, as if to spring
Upon the sun, and shine ten times more brilliant;
And when I hear the language of the forest:
The whippoorwill that whispers in the woods,
The tall and stately trees that sigh and breathe,
And seem to hum a lullaby nocturnal
To all their baby leaves, half slumbering
Within their wind-rocked cradle-limbs—deep peace!
And when from out the hush of fading night
I see the aged, faithful watchman climb,
To turn the countless, flickering lanterns low,
And see the emblazoned herald of the morn
In burnished mail and flowing gorgeous garb
Stretch out his shining spear, a magic wand,

WHEN I CONSIDER

And change the dull-gray cauldron of the east
Into a burning, brilliant yellow sun—
Transformed by some mysterious alchemy—
And when I see a lonely, cotton cloud
Sail o'er the vast, unruffled, sapphire sea,
To join the snow-white squadron of the sky,
I fain would catch that slender, breeze-blown bark,
To bear me closer, nearer Thee, O God,
Through the unending, all-but-crushing world
Of space.

When I behold these wonders Thou hast wrought,
And kneeling hills and virgin peaks sublime,
Ineffable, pointing their birth from heaven,
I seem to be the grass whereon I lie,
So like an obscure, trodden blade I feel:
My life were lost in Thy infinity
But for the trust, Thou art mindful of me.

CHARITY

THE BEGGAR:

“Would you give me a little something
That I may buy my supper?
I have not had anything to eat since this morning;
I walked all the way from——”

THE LADY:

“Here’s a dime, but don’t buy drink with it.”

THE BEGGAR:

“I couldn’t buy it if I wanted to;
But I don’t drink—— Thanks, lady——”

“Lady, would you give me carfare?
I have a job fifteen miles from here:
I’m going to it to-morrow.”

THE LADY:

“Here’s a quarter.”

THE BEGGAR:

“Thanks, lady——”

“Mister, would you give me money
For a night’s lodging?
I just came to this place.
Somebody stole my money, and I had to walk

CHARITY

THE GENTLEMAN:

"Here's a dime."

THE BEGGAR:

"Thanks, mister——"

"Lady, would you give a poor man his supper?"

THE LADY:

"What is your name? And where do you live?
I should like to come to your home to see
If I could help you."

THE BEGGAR:

"Never mind——"

(The world is full of mean people——)"

"Lady, would you give me
Some money for supper?"

THE LADY:

"Here's a dime, my good man."

THE BEGGAR:

"Thanks, lady——"

(That makes only \$2.95 I have made to-day——)

"I'm starved, lady, can you give me
Some money so that I can buy something to eat?"

THE LADY:

"Here's a nickel."

THE BEGGAR:

"Thanks, lady, God bless you——"

THE PENITENTIARY

A brown-stone castle in the city streets,
All sullen in the atmosphere of night,
Frowns on the care-free life that round it beats,
And blinks through peek-holes just to scorn the
light.

Within are many slaves hidd'n from the view
Of those who wonder what goes on inside;
But do not know that months bring changes few,
And that the halls are long and far from wide.

Blue-gray in uniform'd monotony
Are all these men, monastics in their prime;
Working for years, a challenged colony,
Prison'd until each expiates his crime.

And wrongs as many as the numbered there
Have played upon the minds of men, and caught
Their heated passion in a sudden snare,
And left the imprint on their films of thought.

THE PENITENTIARY

Whether they rob, sell opiates, or kill,
There is a life from birth-hour to the grave,
Spanned by the gift divine we call the will
That has the power to destroy or save.

And while we hear the purling of the brooks,
The wind-borne secrets whispered to the leaves,
And echoed by the thrush from hermit nooks,
Or play with sunlight streaking through the trees,

A company of men from everywhere
Mechanically pace the noisy pavement floor,
(Our dregs thrown in a pit a few blocks square)
And go their rounds until a certain door

Shall open out, and to them guards shall give
Back freedom, broken by those bolts and bars;
Loos'd criminals who feel the chance to live
Will find their hopes beyond the realm of stars.

PEARL STREET *between* SEVENTEENTH
and EIGHTEENTH

The name deceives—it is no street of pearl—
But little more than just an alley-way,
With houses on one side, facing a fence
Of plain back-gates,—where no one ever comes
To dwell, perhaps, because nobody moves
Away: such shacks that walls make into homes.

A line of dirty, plain, three-storied fronts,
That throw their filthy water from the doors
Upon the bricks below, that catch the bilge
From dwellings in the rear: there both streams meet,
And flow into the gutter from the curb,
Where children sit and bathe their grimy feet.

Three box-like rooms each one above the other,
Where sleep a family of six or more;
Two rooms, because the one that is downstairs
Is kitchen, dining room, and anything
They choose to make of it—a royal court
For that great retinue of dull disease.

PEARL STREET

In such a place the tender child first hears
The name of his Creator—misapplied,
Beholds, but does not understand, the things
That ever tempt toward deeper poverty:
The rich red robe and crown of fillet-foam
The mother buys and gives her family.

But blacker than the dirt that fills the place
Is that dark ignorance which is not bliss,
In that abysmal realm, where wrong consorts
With sickness, her late spouse, and opes the door
To send their helpless litter out upon
This playground of some feeble-minded poor.

VOCATIONS

The office door closed wearily
And locked itself to sleep. It seemed
It never lived so drearily—
That day, when scores of people streamed

Into and from the busy rooms
To see a man whose sudden word
Protected him from threatening glooms,
Whose pen brought more gold to his hoard.

And after five he motored home
Luxuriously, and did not stand
In sickening, crowded cars, where come
Sweat-breaths from aliens hard and tanned.

Within his gay and splendid house
He found his wife in restful ease,
Snug in a chair like a nest in the boughs,
Free as a finch that gilds the breeze;

VOCATIONS

With satin shoes that still betrayed
The cushion of silk beneath her feet,
Waiting for some laconic maid
To come and tell her she may eat;

But where her husband late has stepped
A widow'd mother scrubs the floor.

DESERTED

Frail, slender thing with concave chest,
And tired eyes so lusterless;
Rough, clumsy hands, all furrow-traced,
Yet capable of tenderness

Toward the children tumbling there,
Unclean and undernourished;
And toward the baby on the couch,
Fretful from flies that cross its head.

The last child, like the other ones,
Came when the father was away;
And while the family cried for food,
He answered by his absence, "Nay."

Frail, slender form, with broken health,
Old with the work that bends her life—
So conscious of her motherhood,
So little of the sense of wife.

THE INSCRUTABLE

With glorious swelling anthems sang the sea
 In perfect waves of some melodic curve;
 One choir-hymn that told its power to serve,
One voice in all its vast immensity.

Almost like glass, but undulating more
 In iridescent patches, blue and green:
 A spreading scarf of softest satin sheen,
That leaves its fringes white on either shore.

This rolling world moves onward, baffling all;
 Abounds with life: with forms unknown and
 strange;
 Leviathans that slumber out of range,
And creeping things innumerable and small;

Stagnates with death in its wide corridor:
 Unmeasured wealth and proudest ships of time,
 Now rotting on the ooze and squalid slime,
Unburied bodies strewn upon the floor—

THE INSCRUTABLE

Mere torments to its insatiety;
 It tempts at first with laughter on its face,
 Then gulps with gluttonous greed the gliding
 race,
And lying flat derides eternity.

But yet a wild concept to bring the blame
 Of treachery, hypocrisy, because
 It is obedient unto natural laws,
And from its water-parent has been the same.

There are so many questions I could ask :
 What means the silence of the eternal deep,
 The roaring waters groaning in their sleep,
Of ships that float has each a special task ?

Whose sails seem silver in the slanting sun;
 Afar pale heavens caress the seas, which try
 To steal the drooping color from the sky;
Or skies that match the sea : two blues made one

By blendings delicate. The line I saw
 Was not the end, but just the threshold wide
 Of chambered labyrinths and halls that hide
The gaping water-swollen forms that draw

THE INSCRUTABLE

No more the breath of life. And while I stand
And watch the white-crown'd waves curl on the
scene
With shaggy shapes plunging in waters green,
And spread a frothy film upon the sand;

I know each day, when gazing on that reach,
That while the waves were sleeping in the light
Of moon and stars, that guard the noiseless night,
The billows, breaking, bounded to the beach.

“SKOOKUM ILLAHEE”

Yon gray-ribbed cabin on the wooded hill,
The lonely sentinel of the slumbering vale,
 With faithful eyes and bold;
That watchest not for hosts of men and things
That are the toys of fiends incarnate, wild,
 Shrieking their vengeance old;

But fairer purpose thine, O simple house,
To hear the thankful sparrow's evensong
 Voiced in a vesper prayer;
Or see the filmy mists that weep in dew
Their aching color on the burning brows
 Like bride-veils wondrous fair.

And I have walked about thy humble rooms
That open into space, and tasted oft
 Thy hospitality;
And heard the fire hissing in thy grate,
Sending its blue-spun flame between the logs
 To die in ecstasy.

“SKOOKUM ILLAHEE”

And out into the noiseless night have crept
To catch a confidence or two from woods
 Laved in a lunar light;
And hushed because the wind had left the trees
To float about my mask of dream-drown'd sleep,
 Till gentle morns, new-bright

With chattering crows that cry and call aroused
Me to the day, and filled my hungry soul
 With opportunity;
For on this hill I caught the truths of God
From one whose life had touched the glowing stars
 And our humanity.

SUPERMAN

I know someone who when a growing lad
Chopped wood
And smoothed it off in many creamy curls,
To make him things of use, and thereby had
An embryonic trade of building forms
Remarkable from objects commonplace;
And while a boy his wisdom-seeking mind
Led him to talk with aged men to find
What in a vicious, sinking world and base
Was good.

And when a man he fashioned as he went,
But not with tools he used when just a child;
Instead he took his hands, and healed the eyes
Of folk who groped about for light long spent;
Or touched the sick one with the palsied leg,
Transmitting to him strength, bidding him take
His rooted couch, obliged no more to beg;
And go, forgiven of ills that once did shake

SUPERMAN

His wretched soul. And somehow I can see
Him run those tender fingers through the hair
Of children (not his own) about his knee
The while he wished that all were just as fair;
Or sit and drink with courtesans, and talk
Of truths divine they never heard before
And lift their blistered, sin-filled frames and walk
With them, bidding them go and sin no more.

O priceless paragon of purity
That learned to reconstruct with common tools,
With healing power more potent than all pools
To cleanse our guilt for all futurity!

And when they were about to take his life
 (The story ran),
 After they bruised and scourged him sore
 And to their taunts kept adding more,
 To slander his own Father in heaven,
 He asked that they might be forgiven;
 I, too, can find no fault in such a man.

HEDONIST

The irksome day was o'er at last,
And darkness fell about the room;
Upon the chairs sat sulking lords
Of discontent, engrossed in gloom.

It drove me out into the street,
Where scores of folk moved to and fro;
And traffic thunder, mixed with lights,
Wrought havoc, and I did not know

Where I should turn. I thought of this
And that café where I might find
Some comfort for my weary soul,
Diversions for my maudlin mind.

I entered one of great renown,
Where all was cheerful, gay and bright;
Where hurried music beat the air,
Ah, there was no such thing as night!

HEDONIST

But soon I wearied of the mirth,
And so went out whence I had dined
To seek my house and faithful bed,
And oped the door only to find

The irksome hours more painful still,
The darkness yet about the room,
And on those chairs the sulking lords
Of discontent, and I their groom.

THE PASSING OF SUMMER

O summer, how I love thy full-blown trees,
Thy clouds spread idly on their couch of blue;
The buzz of locusts and the nectar'd bees,
Thy thousand charms so constant and so new;

Thy gentle rains that make the sun retire,
Thy genial warmth that dries the dew of showers;
Thy songs from birds that mount from high to
higher,
Thy stenciled butterflies upon the flowers!

O summer, beautiful art thou to me,
Too beautiful. I wish that I might hold
Thee close; but in thine eyes I think I see
The touch of autumn, colorful, yet cold.

I wonder wert thou made for just a time,
To leave a benediction on the earth,
And then pass on when thou art in thy prime,
Quitting a land that is dust-dry with dearth.

THE PASSING OF SUMMER

Thou makest way for winter, which I hate—
Its frozen, snowy dreariness I dread;
The boughs let fall their leafy tears of late,
And thou art gone: I cannot think thee dead.

The world is lovelier because thy door
Is opened on the highways everywhere:
I love thee, dearest summer, more and more,
Thou ever art so wonderful and fair.

“WOODCLYFFE”

I saw you once, and loved you at first sight,
And saw you oft again;
And each time loved you more:
Your fair and graceful form
That stands before the winter's storm,
Which beats upon your back;
Your eyes unpained by constancy,
That always look the way that I shall come;
Your hair untrimmed, a wild and saucy brown,
That falls about your sleek and verdant gown—
All breathe a kindly atmosphere of home.

How often have I sailed the bay
That brings its bits of borrowed blue,
Or spreads its robe of ruffled gray—
I know not—just because of you!

How often have I heard the notes
Of gay and hidden singing birds,
That render from their tireless throats
Exquisite hymns that have no words!

“WOODCLYFFE”

How often has the thunder crashed,
And tried to shake you from your place;
How often has the lightning flashed
Its poisoned fangs about your face!

How frequent are the happy times
When strolling through your peaceful wood
I heard the prayerful village chimes
Peal on the air that God is good!

How often have I watched the Muse
By yonder cabin, birch-barked, wee,
Take from that brook her joyous views
And turn her song to poesy!

And all because of you!

I leave you every time with keener pain—
Did I not leave, how could I come again?
Expectant joy!
I always find you in the summer time,
But I should love you when 'tis cold,
And snow-winds wail and whine.

I left you not so long ago,
When mists about you bent,
And soon gave up their choking tears
To join with my lament.

“WOODCLYFFE”

I left you when the moon was dim,
And all the night was still;
I thought I missed you most
Of all—it was a whim;
But more than you, my mother on your shrouded
hill.

OLYMPIAD

I wanted power, and so to Father Zeus
 Poured out my prayer.
I craved his strength, that I might conquer crowds
And hurl my anger to the driving clouds
 That thunder there.

I prayed to wise Minerva that I might
 More wisdom have;
And make my mind the highest earthly goal.
She, thinking on me, from her mental soul
 A portion gave.

And then my heart had need of music, too,
 And prophecy;
Apollo, bending o'er his ray-strung lyre,
Shot arrow'd tones along the golden fire
 Of poetry.

OLYMPIAD

Yet love and beauty with such desperate need
 I did beseech;
And Venus, floating on the foam with doves
Came unto me, and left her precious loves
 Upon the beach.

I had them all; power and wisdom, song,
 And love; but paid for them with sacrifice
And valued gifts, to make my prayers secure
 And wrest their answers from the sacred eyes.

I was a perfect man with all these deities:
 I had no need of rod
 To chasten me;
I had a kind of excellence
 That knew not sin, because I knew not God.

AUSABLE CHASM

High, noble rocks with solid sides
Swell from the emerald pools;
And through this valley hewn by heaven
Are graven names of fools.

CULLED

I know a garden 'neath a wall
Where once there bloomed a lovely rose:
It was the one at last I chose
To be the sweetest of them all.

I saw it as I used to pass
Along the checkered squares of flowers,
And under those wistaria bowers,
So droopt they all but kissed the grass.

I cherished it with kindly care;
Caressed its petals deep and red:
And when I o'er it bent my head,
I sensed a perfume breathing there,

A fragrance exquisitely fine,
Pulsations of a purity
That beat with strange security
From out that wondrous bloom of mine.

CULLED

Because I loved thee so I thought
That thou indeed must be mine own :
Thou queen upon a regal throne,
Nodding to courtiers round thee brought.

Thou hadst no need of any gem,
Nor glittering jewels about thy neck,
Nor sparkling crown thy head to deck,
Save one—the dewdrops' diadem.

I went one morn to that fair spot,
Only to find that thou were gone,
Plucked by a hand before the dawn. . . .
O bitter pain to see thee not !

Unable to behold thy face,
That speaks of pure and noble deeds ;
Thou couldst not live among the weeds :
My garden was too commonplace.

I WONDER

I wonder how it is with you,
Across the smiling, treacherous sea
That bathes the shores of continents
And separates us—you from me?

I wonder what your days have been
Since there I left you in the crowd,
And turned again into the world
With all its hubbub wild and loud?

Despite its harsh, discordant noise—
Its ever onward-sweeping rush—
I hear a lovely melody,
Fainter than any whispered hush.

'Tis always singing in my heart,
But what it is I cannot tell:
I only know it is a song
That asks me still if all is well.

I WONDER

I wonder has the world been kind
To you, fair soul of gentleness,
Or robbed you of your faith, my dear,
Or made your courage any less?

I wonder what the stars have said,
Embroidered on the scarf of night,
Like diamonds woven in arabesques,
While you were waiting for the light?

I wonder what the moon could think,
With shimmering veil upon the deep,
That found you in your darkened bed,
And left a halo round your sleep?

I wonder where your walks have been,
And if companioned by the rains,
Poured from the clouds that crown the heights,
To quench the thirst of parching plains;

Or have been garlanded by snows
Of myriad flakes that screened the air,
And melted on your rosy face,
Or left their tinsel in your hair.

They make a Christmas of the firs,
And clothe the cold and naked trees—

I WONDER

And oh, what loveliness is theirs!

But you have so much more than these,

It adds a glory to them all,

And will throughout the coming years!

I pray your heart shall have no grief,

Your eyes no baptism feel of tears,

Unless by bursting through their gates

With benedictions for your soul,

As waters from a sacred spring,

They wash your wound and make it whole.

And so I wonder through the days,

(Though why it is I cannot tell),

And sometimes waken in the night

And ask of God if it is well;

And then I go to sleep again,

On this side of a rolling sea

That bathes the shores of continents

And separates us—you from me.

MONT BLANC

By the shore of a lake green as emerald,
I looked on a temple of white
Alabaster, and marble, and beryl,
Cut in sapphire of blue infinite;

It stood like a bride at the altar
With fixed gaze on her new lord, the sun,
Who there, while beholding her beauty,
Leaves a kiss on the prize he has won;

Like the veil that falls beautifully from her
With a loveliness graced in each fold,
The glacier streams down to the valley,
To the fields fleck'd with purple and gold.

Oh, the thunders cannot shake your splendor,
White-throned in your majesty there;
And your snows make the centuries seem moments—
Eternal the crown that you wear.

THE GRAY SEA-BIRD HAS LEFT THE WAVES

The gray sea-bird has left the waves,
Has shak'n the water from her wings
And flown into the breathless space,
That dark where no voice speaks, where no voice
sings.

The sun has kissed the waiting west
And placed his slender arms around
His creature dressed in rose and gold
Whose radiant brow a single star has crown'd.

And so their love consummate is
Ere night with grinnings cynical
Comes on, and ere the imperfect moon
Begins her course, the world to pinnacle.

THE GRAY SEA-BIRD

My love was e'en more wonderful
 Although enduring but a day;
More beautiful than yonder cloud,
Pink-tinged, a hundred million miles away.

And I have felt your tender hands
 That made the petals of the flower
Seem rough and hard; and your soft cheeks—
All these were lent to me for one short hour!

But hope is gone: the green leaves curl
 And fall, and withered is the grass;
Because you saw a certain doubt
Appear in looking through the truthful glass

Of your own prophecy. But yet
 You promised to remain my friend—
Which rather aggravates my grief,
And still forbids my broken soul to mend.

It was my happiness, you said,
 That day when, seated on the wall,
You took my hand and whispered, "No":
You cared so much you did not love at all.

THE GRAY SEA-BIRD

It seemed as if you had oped wide
 The curtains of my darkened room;
But somehow, fearful of the light,
Had closed them, passed, and left me in the gloom.

So I shall seek the gray sea-bird,
 That shook the water from her wings
And flew into that breathless space
Of night, where no voice speaks, where no voice
 sings.

LINES WRITTEN TO MY MOTHER
ON HER BIRTHDAY

Another year has passed you by,
 Dear Mother of mine.
And overcast has been your sky;
Through rains I thought I saw you cry,
And in the winds I heard you sigh,
 Dear Mother of mine.

The years will never make you old,
 Dear Mother of mine.
Though they should count a hundredfold,
Nor weight of winters cutting cold,
Because your heart is young and bold,
 Dear Mother of mine.

And while Time treads his arduous way,
 Dear Mother of mine.
For your joy and your peace I pray;
And hope for that ecstatic day,
When with a kiss you'll hear me say,
 "Dearest of Mothers—mine!"

IT ALMOST SEEMED AS IF YOU CALLED

I sit in the path of a golden light
That the sun makes as it sinks
Toward the turquoise distance.
The path goes gradually from me.
Like some great Japanese lantern
The sun rests for a moment
Upon the edge of the water;
Gray ships sleep westward.
The youthful moon like a princess
Of silver, set in a background
Of palest blue, rises to see her domain.
A mantle of color, delicate and exquisite,
Is thrown upon the world
With divine artistry; and the portrait
Of evening stands resplendent
With its touches of red and gold and pink
On an easel of cloud.
The loveliness of it all whispers
Your name;
You seem so near:

IT ALMOST SEEMED AS IF YOU CALLED

And I feel as if I could go to you. . . .
I leave my couch of stones and cross
The wet and wrinkled beach
Toward the tide that slumbers softly.
I go on, jubilant at being nearer
To you at each step :
I should have walked still farther,
Had I not trod upon the sea.

THE CONQUEROR

LINES WRITTEN IN MEMORY OF THE
REV. GEORGE HOOPER FERRIS, D.D.
OBIIT SEPTEMBER 16, 1917

I

The gray church stones are grayer now,
The panes more somber in their hues,
More shaded are the brilliant blues
That make the background for the brow

Of One who died when in His prime,
In bleeding anguish on the cross:
That picture keeps all fresh the loss
Of him who by the scythe of Time

Fell broken in a sudden hour
That seemed to me came far too soon:
Before the sun had reached its noon
The reaper swung and killed the flower.

THE CONQUEROR

II

The buildings and the shafts that men
Erect each year to newer heights,
Which see mankind as crawling mites,
Will some time fall to earth again.

And so collapsed that tower, my friend,
Imposing, splendid on a rock,
Until an earthquake with its shock
Crippled the base and made an end.

III

He took me by the hand one June,
And bade me welcome to the place
Wherein he preached; and in his face
Shone goodness from a soul in tune

With love and mysteries divine;
And all the people bowed the head
The while they took the symbol-bread,
Or drank the sacramental wine.

THE CONQUEROR

IV

How often have I seen him play
 Upon that rounded hilltop wild,
 As full of joy as any child
That rings his laughter through the day!

How often has he shown to me
 Clear glimpses of eternal truth:
 How in the plain man and uncouth
Lies that called immortality!

How many times along the street
 We two have talked philosophy.
 And he would quote rich poetry:
How oft have I heard him repeat,

“Good-bye, proud world! I’m going home,”
 And other thoughts from Emerson,
 Or Browning, or from Tennyson.
His lips are sealed: no more can come

Those sermons that could burn and bless,
 And lift me from the crowd of cares;
 Nor those ascending, heaven-breathed prayers,
Unequaled in their tenderness.

THE CONQUEROR

How different seems the high-backed chair,
That for a decade cushioned him;
The lectern at the pulpit's rim—
And he at service elsewhere!

He always stood for what was true,
With courage and sincerity;
And when he fought, fought fearlessly,
Emboldened by the Christ he knew.

V

O mind profound, thou art not dead
Because thy form has lost its sense,
And dropped into a dungeon dense,
With wriggling earthworms near thy head.

For him, whom in the throng of things
Some hold as crass material—
Whose ways were so ethereal—
My saddened voice too feebly sings.

He loved the thistle and the thorn,
The grand, unyielding Alpine peak:
His hands were low to lift the weak,
His thoughts beyond his Matterhorn.

THE CONQUEROR

He knew within the enormous earth,
 With sapphire space from pole to pole,
 The value of a human soul
Whate'er his creed or whence his birth.

VI

How lovely was dear Nature's world,
 The birds, and every wooded reach,
 The snow-hills silencing our speech,
Blue, oriental waves white-curved,

Embroidered on the windy shore!
 And as the water and the sands
 Steal trickling from the grip of hands,
So slipt my friend, and is no more.

No more? A dream that is untrue,
 With horrid shapes that haunt the night,
 And fetter with the sense of sight;
For 'twas his spirit that I knew,

And know e'en yet. I have it still
 In grasping at a truth profound,
 And feel somehow our lives are bound
Together in the eternal Will.

THE CONQUEROR

VII

And she is left, a lonely soul,
Companion of his fruitful years,
Who poured his joys and drank his tears,
And gave the half to make the whole.

VIII

O grave, thou hast no victory,
O death, thy fangs have lost their sting;
And time is such a little thing,
Compared to that eternity

Where ministers in ways untrod
My pastor in the heavens curved:
His form sleeps in the world he served,
His spirit is at work with God.

EGYPT UNVISITED

There is history yonder,
And beauty.
The sun that peers through factory smoke here
Has for renascent centuries
Looked down upon your mosques,
With screens of dark wood and polished surfaces,
Inlaid with mosaics
Of ivory, ebony, and mother-of-pearl;
And delicate filigrees of plaster
Beneath the exquisite tracery
Of clerestories.

Whence came your palaces
With beautiful courts and fountains
Laughing tears of silver?
And Morisco arches tessellated
With rare marbles?

These came from the genius of a noble race.

EGYPT UNVISITED

In your multi-color bazars
I should bargain
With goldsmiths, forging filigree
Delicately over charcoal flames;
And watch the crowd twist in and out
The narrow streets.
And then I should return to those

Matchless minarets under the hot
Blue sky;
To the glorious oriels of carved and fretted
Woodwork, latticed in bewildering abundance;
And I should gather rare flowers,
Defiant under the relentless sun,
And the pink tamarisk in the swamps;
And pass through the historic aisles
Of your libraries, perhaps without reading.
And then I should ask the impervious Sphinx
If this wide land
In all its splendor
Is still a place with plagues
Of frogs, lice, flies, locusts, hail—
And hardness of heart.

BONFIRES

I looked at the leaves
Toward the end of the day,
And raked them up into heaps.
I lighted the piles,
And gray smoke curled
Through the openings.
The fire crackled
And transformed the mounds
Into cinerary crests,
Dull and gray like death.

I gathered my thoughts
At the end of the day
And burnt them with the hot torch
Of prayer.
Oh, but the smoke was black,
And likewise the ashen remains!

THE PASSING OF SANTA CLAUS

For seven sweet years at the glad Christmas time
Came a tree trimmed with tinsel and toys;
And it stood in the hall
At the turn of the stairs,
As if to make sure it would catch every chime
Of a solemn old clock saying hourly prayers
'Gainst a wall,
And somehow appearing to miss all the joys.

My dear little girl loved the sight of that fir
And the stocking all swollen with things
That the good saint had left,
And those queens of Cockaigne —
The stupid, mute dollies, too lazy to stir;
But she hugged them, and nursed them, and remedied pain
With her deft
Little hands that were soft as an angel's white wings.

THE PASSING OF SANTA CLAUS

But Baby's belief in the beautiful myth
Of a Santa with reindeer has fled—
A trust once in Kris
Is now in a Christ,
And Christmas is ever so different with
Not a sign of the tree that each Yuletide sufficed—
Except this;
For the dear saint has vanished—my Joey is dead.

MY MISTRESS

I send her flowers fresh and fair—

My mistress—

And sweetmeats in a painted box

With ribbons which her color mocks—

My mistress.

I buy her ornaments, rare gems—

My mistress—

Jewels that shine on lovely hands,

All white like oriental sands—

My mistress.

She has my love and I have hers—

My mistress—

Her love is steadfast and 'tis whole:

She is the mistress of my soul—

My wife.

KINGS

They called him King, and on his head they set
A crown; and he was stiff with majesty.
The ermine and the purple robe were hung
With nicest care; and in his hand they put
A sceptre of fine gold; bright jewels flashed
About the heavy and ornate brocade.
A company of personages grand
Were gathered there, and they did bow to him
As best they could encased in stiffened state.
There was a woman by his side; she, too,
Wore costly robes and brilliant ornaments.
“Long live the King!” He lives e’en yet—insane.
They say much learning made him mad—perhaps;
But he became obsessed with power and craved
The world as children cry for yonder moon,
Which happily remains beyond their grasp.
He sought a realm and prestige greater than
The greatest ever held by any king,
Though in his getting he might draw the blood
Of myriads—to speak of millions were

KINGS

Too few. But was it he who scattered lies,
Flung Truth aside, and wooed Suspicion sweet,
And did he in his drunkenness abduct
And drag young women to his dens? Ah, no,
He had these done, and then gave thanks to God
For being on his side! Unto a few
He gave out crosses just in memory of
Their gory deeds of inhumanity.
But tyrants do not live to endless age;
And some time shall this wretched world of ours
Grow strong again and hurl him from his throne:
The earth shall cry once more, "The King is dead."

"Long live the King!" on whom they put a crown
Of thorns. They hailed him King, but he was King
Before they gave to Him a purple robe,
Or put into His hand a reed, or placed
Upon His head a crown. No crosses gave
He to the world, but took the world's upon
His back. And there were no historic jewels
To play upon those fingers that so oft
Restored the sick that swarmed in Galilee.
No crimson cushion and no silken shoes
Had he; no stiff, forbidding elegance.
Upon a cross they nailed Him, hands and feet,
And put a spear into His naked side,
And 'mong them for His vesture they cast lots.

KINGS

He had no kingly goblet of red wine;
A sour sponge, soaked well in vinegar,
They gave. And they, as He, looked up toward God.
There was a woman by His side, the same
Who saw Him first a baby on her breast.
The rabble jeered and bade Him save Himself
By some fantastic, sordid trickery;
But He outmocked rather their blatant scorn
By saving all the world instead, although
In doing it He died. But no, He lives,
The Christ, Who had not where to lay His head,
Who knew nought of the gentle, canopied sleep
Of palaces, who bore that twisted thing
Of thorns, a Sovereign who finally
Will rule, and wrest the struggling, wounded world
From out the grasp of maddened tyranny.
And Truth and Right shall teach the earth to cry,
"The King is dead. LONG LIVE THE KING
OF KINGS!"

IN JUDGMENT

The ruler of a mighty nation stood
Within his gray and gloomy judgment Hall
In false indifference, yet in sullen mood,
Anxious to know if he should rise or fall.

The causes had been tried; he was alone
Before a judging Conscience, sitting high,
Sternly enthroned, the kindly visage gone;
Instead it seemed to utter, "Thou must die.

"The crimes that thou hast sanctioned, haughty sire—
Disease hast sown, and propagated too,
And cruelties so exquisite that fire
Thy ready hate, and breathe anew

"The spirit of a strange barbarity
That worlds and ages past have never known—
Have made thee people hell. Hear this decree:
Go hence, insatiate slaughterer—join thine own."

PAULINE, THE "KULTURED" CHILD

An ashen dust o'erspread the road,
From dwellings that were burnt to earth,
Where folk had made their plain abode,
Each household, at its altar-hearth
Knowing the happiness of being one.

Two strangers met by chance one day,
A cherub child, a Belgian,
And, travelling along that way,
A lady, an American:
Two humans oddly met through circumstance.

A gentle creature, lovely girl,
In all that desolation there!
Among the common stones a pearl,
Or, mid the weeds, a flower fair;
Yet some passed on, because they did not see.

PAULINE, THE "KULTURED" CHILD

"Thine eyes had all but matched the shade
Of heaven when upward first they rolled;
Thy hair of silken skeins has made
The weaving for a cloth of gold,
Or formed a nest wherein sunbeams could lie."

The lady paused, then asked the child
Her name and age, speaking a tongue
She understood. And then she smiled,
For she was touched by lips where hung
Warm kisses for her soft and lovely cheeks.

"Pauline's my name, and I am ten—"
"A pretty name, chérie; please write—"
"I"—tears had drenched her eyes just then
Like dew upon the curtained night,
Or sudden showers from an azure sky.

"Ten years, and cannot write thy name?
O thought that makes my heart beat low—
If thou shouldst always be the same,
Untaught through all thy life to go;"
Then Pauline, turning, showed she had no hands.

THE MARCH OF MARS

The world is all too full of bitterness
And wrong, and doubt confers at every turn
With gaunt mistrust; and brands of anger burn
The humble shrine of simple tenderness.

Wild Hatred carves each horrid, hideous child
And serves it to his red minion, Revenge,
To sow it through his land, and thus avenge
The wrongs that have been so unjustly piled.

And devils dance about the battlements
Of brutish souls that have a certain glee
In slaying common folk they do not see
With all the ardor of their armaments.

But yet are faith and prayer—those voices still—
That speak of God when all about us here
Is crass with kings, who like a crazy Lear
Cry, "Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!"

THE PHILOSOPHER

As children gather near their father's chair
To hear a story that he has to tell,
Or learn the rules of some unheard-of game,
Intent on every word and catching all,
A group of students in philosophy
Had their Lyceum round their master's stool.
The topic for the day was "Life and Man,"
And, to express their laws, he thus began:

"There was a time when many people thought
The individual could claim some rights,
That justice was a thing for every soul,
And that the soul possessed unmeasured worth.
There is a trace of such stupidity
Even to-day, except with those who have
Been cultured and refined. Those vicious days
So narrow in their scope are happily
Gone by; and now remain the sweeping breadth
And dominating power of the will."

THE PHILOSOPHER

One of The Group:

"That is to say . . ."

The Master:

"There is no such thing as humanity.
Go out to-morrow to another country.
Resolve to conquer it. You need no real excuse.
Call it enemy to incite your hate. And begin
To plunder it. I should commend you for this.
Hide in the caverns of the sea, and from
Your closets send out piercing rockets
To tear and wreck a harmless ship. You need
Not take the trouble to warn it, and if the men,
Women, and children perish, they perish.
They will not die before their time.
I should give you a souvenir for this."

Another of The Group:

"But . . ."

The Master:

"Cut off the hands of children, and if
You do not have time for both
Sever the right one.
Destroy churches and villages."

THE PHILOSOPHER

A Third of The Group :

“And if . . .”

The Master :

“If you do this, I shall call you philosophers.

Fly in the air to unventured heights,

From which

Drop

Deadly

Bombs

On hospitals, babies,

Civilians, no matter what.

If you do all of these things

With nothing but the sense of hate, I shall call you

Noble men.

To-morrow we shall treat it in a fuller way,

I have been interrupted far too much to-day.”

BREAKFAST AT 4 BIS RUE JULES

CHAPLAIN

They put my breakfast on a tray,
And send it to my room. . . .
I look out of the window and see
An empty street and walls shut tight with blinds.
Sometimes a woman, passing, stops
Before an ash can and hunts in it
For something precious.
If I lean out of my window,
I can see more of the empty street
And shuttered walls.
It is a lonely place for breakfast,
And so I bring up a chair for you, dear mother,
I bring up a chair for you.

LISTS

I used to read the lists of hurt and dead,
 That line in black the columns of the page,
 That tell of men in youthful, flowering age
Who for triumphant Truth their blood have shed.

I used to read those long and famous lines,
 As if they were a great soliloquy
 From some dark drama of Melpomene,
Inspired by pilgrims lifeless at her shrines.

I do not read the long lists any more,
 That took my heart and seemed to make it loud
 With throbs heavier than the thunder-cloud—
I read them not: I know none in the war.

THE GOOD-NIGHT KISS

I feel no kind and loving arms
Ere I crawl into bed,
No good-night kiss, no "happy dreams"
Before I lay my head.

Nothing but unfamiliar walls
With windows folding in;
And muffling mists from street to roof
That choke the lights within.

And some, too, feel no fond embrace—
Those for whom prayers were said;
For they are sleeping in the field,
Uncovered, cold, and dead,

Where the moon has forgotten to shine,
And the rains beat upon the temple of a soul
That has departed;
And where icy, insensate lips kiss
A colder wind.

THE GOOD-NIGHT KISS

I wish I now could have my kiss
Each night before my bed;
But happier am I than they
Who know their sons are dead!

CRANES

Spreading their wings when all is dark,
Like mantles on the grave of night,
They crane their necks in search of food
Before they take their graceless flight.

Their pinions fan the heavy air
With pulses regular and strong;
Their cry is coarse and guttural,
And no less raucous is their song.

* * * *

She stopped them in the street one night,
And with an accent said, "Hello";
But she knew many English words,
And one of them was "sleep." And so

She darted round the lurid lights,
Restless, swerving, seeking sleep;
And strutted on the avenues,
Robed in her finery, tinsel, cheap.

CRANES

She covered with powder and paint
The ugly pores in her skin,
And tried to make herself sweet
With strong perfume.
Her eyes were lusterless,
And she was hollow-chested.
Her hands were dirty—noticeable
From the sparkle of inexpensive rings.

Her ugliness was exquisite,
And yet to some she was beautiful:
It mattered not that she was a festering sore
Oozing poison that sometimes brought
Blind babies into the world.

And when the new day smiled on the streets,
And people went about
In their serious business of service,
She, disheveled, more hideous than ever,
Lay slumbering in her filthy nest,
Breathing the sleep she scorned the night before.

O God! in our passion for patriotism
Give us the patriotism of purity.

* * * *

More horrible than rending shell,
That cuts an arm and sets it free;

CRANES

Or burns the eyes with fire of hell,
And robs them of their power to see;

More subtle than the poisoned air,
That moves in waves before the breeze,
And clutches throats and makes them bare—
A terror worse than all of these

Is on the boulevards and "*rues*,"
When strong men fall the prey of "*grues*."

DIALOGUE

It was a lovely place at one time
With the breath of contentment in every part;
But Abaddon passed through it one day,
And now it is only a memory.
Splendid churches are gone,
And all that remains
Of houses is a raggedness of walls,
Torn and windowed with holes.
It seems as if the ground had groaned
From some great agony, destroying all
As it rolled in its restlessness.
There was peace and prosperity once,
There is ruin and destruction now,
Because a legion of demons hold their Bacchanal,
*"Et Satan conduit le bal,
Et Satan conduit le bal,
Conduit le bal!"*

It told her a story without speaking a word,
And she in her sorrow replied:

DIALOGUE

“Your discourse I have long since understood,
And I have felt your burning eloquence
In all the fervor of your armaments,
And rising rivers, running red with blood.

“You stormed my house and burnt it with the rest,
The cross-topped church where I was wont to
pray
You shattered when you rioted that way,
And with your torches saw its ruin best.

“You insolently entered my own home,
And took my husband from his pleasant hearth,
And made for him a bed in yonder earth,
As far from me as it is from the dome

“Of heaven. My sons you have cut down like wheat,
My brothers, too, perhaps—in three long years
I have received no word, and through my tears
I see my sisters sweeping in the street.

“And I have seen your airships in their flight
Appear but specks because they soared so high;
And watched the flashes on the moonlit sky,
And heard those things that thunder through the
night.

DIALOGUE

"I, too, have known your cunning cruelty,
The tortures of your mad, inhuman deeds,
Collected in the catalogues and creeds
Of all your exquisite barbarity.

"Although you wrecked my church along your way,
And left it hopeless in its ruin there,
And robbed me of my holy place of prayer,
You have not crushed my deep desire to pray;

"And though from somewhere in the sky above,
A something rends, and cleaves my baby's head,
And adds another to the list of dead,
It cannot take away my power to love.

"With all the murder of your insane dance,
Of bursting bombs and flying bits of shell,
That rain as if from an inverted hell,
You have not touched a single *soul* in France!"

SEQUENCE

I picked up a loose piece of earth, broken
Because the top of a column fell to the ground,
Being forced from its place by a descending machine
That vol-planed during the darkness of an air raid,
When enemies were cutting the air and dropping
bombs

Because they were at war;
And at war because there was greed, ambition,
And hate within the mind of men,
Who some day will lie as specks of dust,
Perhaps similar to the piece of earth that I picked up.

SUPPLIANTS

The sun is set. Another day is gone.
But yonder where the land begins again
The light still lingers like a lover loath
To quit his choice, though he return at dawn.
And there the one, from whom with tender pain
I slowly drew my hand, goes busily
Throughout the dragging hours; but in her heart
She guards a rooted thought the while she waits
And lives—I do not know how much—for me.
And I am always lifting up this prayer:
“O God, my only love is in Thy care.”

The sun is up. Another day begins.
The east is smoky and lurid with fire;
And Death goes grinning up and down the lines,
Nodding to this one, then to that, and thins
The ranks to keep ablaze his crackling pyre.
While hosts of harm around me are arrayed,
May I be ever strong, courageous, true;
And in the thunderous tumult of the war
I wish no knighthood but the accolade
From yonder bedside-altar in that prayer:
“O God, my only child is in Thy care.”

MY HOME IN FRANCE

There is a house upon a hill,
 Away from busy, hurried toil,
Where all is beautiful and bright——
 In high Clamart, upon the soil

Of France; a place that was my home
 In times of battle, “seas of gore”;
It mattered not where I might be,
 I knew there was an open door.

The very beauty makes me sad:
 The ivy on the tower tall;
But more, the delicate and pale
 Wistaria drooping on the wall.

The garden has a hallowed peace——
 The odorous air and incense-flower——
I worship while the light streams through
 Rose windows of a churchlike bower.

MY HOME IN FRANCE

As herald to the breaking day,
As certain as to-morrow's morn,
Along the dust-swept country roads
The welcome baker blows his horn.

The animals lend kindly cheer,
Each one within its own domain:
The rabbits, birds, hens, dog, and cat,
And doleful ducks that quack of rain.

"The Swallows" is my foreign home,
Where each bloom in its beauty bends
To breathe a word and whisper soft
The simple kindness of my friends,

Who shared with me their sunny house,
Away from busy, hurried toil,
Below the wood atop the hill
Of high Clamart, on France's soil.

LUCKY DOG

Homely animal of the street,
Running free without a single care,—
At will,—
Lucky dog!

Man in uniform and straight,
A part of a war
In which he serves humanity—
Lucky dog!

INVADERS

I watched them coming down the road
With halting step, though none looked back;
For they had given their lands again
To fields where bombs and cannon crack.

I saw that long and slow black line,
As it passed wearily that day;
The old folk with the young, like white
December linked with golden May.

I saw the bulky things they bore,
Swollen with precious rescued goods;
I saw the gardens green and wide,
I saw the smoke curl from the woods.

* * *

I watched the quick and buoyant line,
As it came lightly up the road;
They sang a song: the air did cheer,
The brook applauded as it flowed.

INVADERS

There was a story in each step,
 There was a message in each eye—
Life-illustrations of the great
 Recorded facts of history.

And one cried out, the while he passed,
 A happy smile upon his face:
“You’ll find your homes as when you left;
 We’re going up to take your place.”

DECADENCE

They say that autumn is a time
Of sadness, dying, and of death
Itself: when summer's fervor has
Gone by, and when in every breath

There is a vaporous chill: a time
That takes all loveliness away:
The antiphon of choiring birds
That joyously began in May:

Trees thin, and gaunt, and angular,
Stripped of their long, umbrageous shawl,
Stand stark and shiver with the wind:
Where, then, is beauty in the fall?

The sapphire of September skies,
The opal of October haze,
The topaz of November noons,
The turquoise of December days?

DECADENCE

The leaves have left their branches bare,
No more companions to the owl;
They lie upon the placid ponds
Like yellow pansies in a bowl;

Or else scrape crisp across the ground
To join the heaps of kindred dead
In ugly mounds: now wrinkled chips
That once illumed with gold and red

The sylvan temples in the hills,
Where swaying incense of the pines
Deep permeates with odors soft
This place that needs no priests or shrines.

And fall is fall—in forest glade
So strangely calm, so weirdly still,
Or out upon a mangled reach
Where men are slain, or where they kill;

But if for truth and righteousness
They give their lives, their very all,
Then, though the red leaves lose their grip,
Is there no beauty in the fall?

REVEILLE

Where once the noisy, hot artillery
Boomed out its thunders on a groaning ground
A little distant from the town Coincy,
I saw some crosses rising from a mound,
And hardened soldiers digging up the graves.
A day or two before had they unsealed
The tomb where slept your love with fellow braves
And sent him to a different, unknown field.
Ah, Gertrude, they had taken your lord away!
My flowers were a coronal too dim
Beside the gems of his great crowning-day
Above the death that could not fetter him.
I heard an angel-song upon the air:
"Not here, for he has risen elsewhere."

AT RHEIMS

Come, hands, and bind the old cathedral's wounds!
From murky dens of daedal deviltries,
Coarse Calibans in lawless revelries,
In pandemonium of ribald sounds,
Rejoice at that successful outrage there.
I see the scarred, burnt features and the walls,
The roof is pierced; another loose tile falls;
Closed are the doors to music and to prayer.

Come, voices, let your diapason ring,
And make the towers tremble with your praise,
Exultant to the cope of yonder sky!
That thou art spared is not so strange a thing;
For life created in such wondrous ways
Must live till earth shall pass before it die.

ALAN SEEGER

The words are done. The covers of the song
Are closed. The lingering murmur from the keys,
Diminuendo, slow and sweetly long,
Dies out; the singer, who his triumph sees,
Departs mid storms of thundering applause.
He comes not back: he is forever gone;
And yet the crowd goes humming as it draws
Away toward streets where late the sunlight shone.
So you have passed too far for you to hear
The praises that electrify the air;
And yet not dead because that strangely dear
Appointment holds you mercilessly there.
And though that thief has bound you fast with bands,
Your music still is heard through many lands.

ON THE LAKE COUNTRY OF ENGLAND

Like some great dimple with a trembling tear,
A vale there is that holds a glistening lake;
And I see cloudland fastnesses where break
Mauve mists that muse and melt o'er Windermere.
The way runs fast through rows of hedges green,
That mimic it at all the sudden turns
By woodland copse or where retiring ferns
Wave chlorophyll that they may live unseen.

In Hawkshead, Coniston, Grasmere, and all
The rest, great ones lived out their thoughtful lives
Leaving a gift that riches cannot buy;
They felt the hand of man and heard his call;
They climbed the heights from where the red sun
dives
And splashes gold across a turquoise sky.

AFTER A VISIT TO THE PARISH CHURCH,
CLEVEDON, ENGLAND

To the Noble Hallam of My Cambridge Days

Upon a gentle, grassy hill
A church of gray antiquity
Mid signs of Death's ubiquity
Hallows a spot where all is still;

And with a clear, unbroken view
It looks on Severn's lovely face.
But while I scanned this silent place,
I saw but elms: there was no yew

Twining its roots about "the stones
That name the underlying dead,"
And I on holy ground was led
In quest of that which keeps the bones

VISIT TO THE PARISH CHURCH

Of him whom in sad literature
Lord Alfred sings with passion—
The immortal friend of Tennyson—
Friendship transcendent and secure!

Within, upon a corner wall,
Five tablets to the family
Are hung in rich simplicity;
And Arthur's most revered of all!

Decaying bones are 'neath the floor;
But up above I read the name
Of him who passed too soon for fame,
And wish his years had numbered more.

I read the cantos I love best
From "In Memoriam" that day,
And afterwards I knelt to pray,
Bringing again my great request:

That through the uncertainty of time,
Whate'er my trials or your cares
Our bond be pattern'd after theirs
In friendship evermore sublime.

ON SEEING AMERICA AGAIN

As looking on the face again of one
So long unseen, I gaze on thee and speak
To thee once more as I had always done,
Feeling that all my praises are too weak.
Thy roof-tops all but tire the upturned eyes—
I wonder at thy monuments of gold;
And as the queen who lived 'neath ancient skies
I stand, knowing the half has not been told.

America, thou Champion of the wronged,
A name that stirs the heart and thrills each nerve,
I love thee, not for all thy treasures thronged,
But for thy noble sacrifice to serve;
I feel that in my absence thou hast grown,
And thou art dearer for new greatness shown.

SHADOWS

Upon a tremulous day so summer-sweet,
When all the air was quivering, athrill;
When bended arms of the maturing wheat
Did slowly raise the breezes from the hill;
The sun stole down on slender strands of gold,
All shimmering to the last thin ether-rings,
When a white cumulus cloud, free from its fold,
Strayed near the field and shadowed it with wings.
So you stood looking on my lonely joy,
Your satin streamers saucy round your face;
You smiled on me as on a half-grown boy,
And then passed on with scornful, gorgeous grace—
But I recall, though here in cavernous night,
That shadows gather only in the light!

EVENING ON THE ST. LAWRENCE

There is blue on the river, and gold,
And evening with opal eyes
Considers her panels of ruby and pearl
Before she begins to enfold

The shadowy, mute island-flock
All gathered in dark repose;
And silence were regnant except for the wave
That listlessly plashes the rock,

Or the hollow, sick laugh of the loon
That mournfully falls on the air;
But nature, unheeding, toward saffrony clouds
Is tossing on high the round moon,

Like a child with a truant ball,
Which he loses and finds the next day;
And twilight is cradling her children to rest,
And hushed is the whitethroat's call.

EVENING ON THE ST. LAWRENCE

And hung o'er the lap of the streams
The willows are quiet in sleep;
But I see in the emerald glass each leaf
Astir with the quiver of dreams.

ON THE SINKING OF THE *ARABIA*,
NOVEMBER 6, 1916

LINES IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
RESCUE OF PAUL RUTLEDGE DANNER

I looked with solemn awe upon the sea,
Whose surging waters rolled through trackless
miles;

I saw its thunder-frowning head, the smiles
Wherewith it mocks our frail mortality.

I must have strained my searching eyes to find
A sea-gray ship of fair and finished form,
Come sailing out of eastern countries warm,
But saw her not: it seemed that I grew blind

From looking long upon the unbroken view
So fixedly; but I had interest
In a security that made me invest
My all. I knew not officers nor crew,

ON THE SINKING OF THE *ARABIA*

Nor any of the passengers—save one,
 Bringing that single, previous bond to me,
 While waited I in tense expectancy,
Not knowing that a tragic thing was done.

This noblest man of God sat on his chair
 In quiet peace, revolving in his thought
 The months gone by, the work that he had
 wrought
Just when a peering periscope its lair

Had left in quest of prey, that it might give
 Sweet morsels to the bitterness within,
 And light on lips of lurking lords the grin
Of devilish content: where men contrive

In sunken realms of ocean depths profound
 To keep each suspect bark from its far goal,
 Not caring if they torture every soul,
And shroud them in a night that smothers sound.

So sailed beneath those sympathetic skies
 My early friend and my best self, my guide;
 The unseen rocket tore the vessel's side:
She bowed, and nobly sank in sacrifice.

ON THE SINKING OF THE *ARABIA*

And then the squinting monster of the main
 Unclosed its lustful eye of savage fire
 To look once more upon its late desire,
Before it sped away to feast again.

The ship it was that slipped below the wave,
 And not the travelers in crowded craft;
 Heaven placed my anxious brother on a raft,
And spared him from an unknown, flowerless grave.

I blame not you, O waters of the deep,
 For feelings that go through me like a knife:
 Those plotting pirates tried to take his life;
And I, soft-couched in such delicious sleep!

Thus rose the man supreme o'er treachery vile,
 When musing minds had wondered if he
 drown'd:
 He strangely like the great apostle found
A welcome haven at beckoning Malta's isle.

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